

# AFFIRMATION

RECEIVED June 1978 ---  
United Methodist for  
Gay and Lesbian Concerns

MAY 30 1980

TOP PRIORITY FOR AFFIRMATION ---- At the May 1978 national meeting of AFFIRMATION held in Chicago, Illinois, the following recommendation was adopted unanimously by consensus: "During the coming year the top priority for AFFIRMATION shall be the development of a network among lesbians, gay men, and supportive non-gay persons in the United Methodist Church.

"This network will relate the activities and strategies at the national, regional and local community levels; indeed the development of such a network will help to establish the supportive structures necessary for the strategies required at each level.

"This network shall facilitate the tasks of communication and education. It is imperative that AFFIRMATION have a 'communication network', thus providing a multi-directional channel for the sharing of news, information, resources, and referral between individuals (many of whom are isolated) and organized groups in regions and local communities throughout the country.

"Consistent with this priority concern, participants at the May national meeting authorized a Communications Task Force to assist the Editor in the regularizing of a quarterly Newsletter, and to establish a national AFFIRMATION Communication and Resource Center (viz: AFFIRMATION, [redacted] Kansas City, Kansas [redacted])

"Also, an Education Task Force was established to compile and produce an 'educational packet' of literature and materials related to gay/lesbian issues and concerns (to be presented & reviewed at the next national meeting in Oct.

"While recognizing that it will be vitally important for us to provide for, and maintain, a creative 'presence' and visibility at the 1980 General Conference, our first concern must be to facilitate an authentic ministry among gay persons which is not dependent upon General Conference for its validation.

"The development and implementation of a network for communication and education seeks to fulfill the intention of our stated purpose to 'affirm that all Christians are called to ministry' and that 'as gay and lesbian United Methodist Christians and their supporters we affirm that we have received a call to ministry in the Church & in the world.'"

CO-COORDINATORS AFFIRMATION asks that  
RECEIVE DUES individuals pay dues  
of \$10.00 per year.

Where this is not possible, a donation in a lesser amount will be received gladly. Payment of dues or a donation brings a year's subscription to the Newsletter. Checks payable to AFFIRMATION may be forwarded to either co-coordinator. Be sure full mailing address is indicated. Co-coordinators are

Michael Collins

[redacted]  
New York, New York

and

Peggy Harmon

[redacted]  
Dallas, Texas

\* \* \*

NEWSLETTER At the Chicago meeting in May AFFIRMATION began regularizing its Newsletter by specifying publication four times a year and by establishing a Communications Task Force and a Communications Center. News, comment and features may be forwarded to the Communications Center or to the editor of the Newsletter who is:

Ed Egan

[redacted]  
Haverstraw, New York

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AFFIRMATION'S Education Task Force will be compiling a packet of materials dealing with lesbian/gay concerns to be considered at the national meeting in October. This is an educational packet for the leadership of the United Methodist Church. Any material - audio, visual or printed - that members of AFFIRMATION feel should be considered for this packet should be submitted by August 15 to one of the co-coordinators or to:

Douglas Brandt

[redacted]  
Denver, Colorado

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BY: .....

We are Christians because God loves us through Christ; and we find ourselves responding in love - to God, to neighbors, and to all of creation. In the lives of gay/lesbian children of God where we especially experience rejection and oppression, we seek to love others as Christ loves us.

These devotional aids have the single purpose of nurturing our growth in Christ. Assembled for the use of AFFIRMATION members and supporters, let us be aware that these aids can become a common spiritual communion with our isolated sisters and brothers. The scripture passages are selected from the United Methodist Book of Worship, pages 61-64. Themes are suggested for our prayers and meditations.

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\* \* \*

June 18-24 Luke 19:1-10

Many consider lesbians and gay men beyond the reach of God's redemptive love. This is not so. There are no boundaries to God's love. Let us pray that all may experience God's grace regardless of the barriers set up by people and church structures.

\* \* \*

June 25-July 1 Luke 11:1-13

Pray that God will hear our prayers and satisfy our needs through Christ.

\* \* \*

July 2-8 Luke 8:4-15

Let us ask God to give us understanding.

\* \* \*

July 9-15 Psalm 13; Matt. 10:16-33

Praise God whose love never fails us.

\* \* \*

July 16-22 Ruth 1:15-17

Let us thank God for women, who are essential members of Christian community and who provide leadership and models for growth.

\* \* \*

July 23-29 Psalm 17

Let us lift up the fact that God sides with those unjustly oppressed.

\* \* \*

July 30-August 5 II Corinthians 3:5-18

Share with God our gratitude that in Christ we are not under a legalistic obedience to the Old Testament law; but that in the Spirit of Christ we are under the freedom of love.

\* \* \*

Aug. 6-12 Psalm 19:7-14; Matt. 11:28-30

Ask God to guide and to teach us how to follow the two great commandments in Matthew 22:37-40 and the only commandment given by Christ, John 15:12, "that you love one another as I have loved you."

\* \* \*

Aug. 13-19 Ephesians 6:10-18

Pray that we may learn the value and the use of God's gifts as we confront the powers of evil in the church and in the world today.

\* \* \*

Aug. 20-26 Phil. 4:1-8; Mark 14:3-9

Many women experience alienation from the scriptures because of their male orientation. Yet, even in one of Paul's letters we are told of the contributions made by women of Philippi and recall that Lydia and her friends were instrumental in establishing the church in Philippi, (Acts 16:12-15.) Note also in the Mark passage that women were among the followers of Jesus who participated in the central events of Christ's life, ministry, death and resurrection. Pray that we may become more attentive and appreciative of what women contribute to life and to Christian ministry.

\* \* \*

August 27-Sept. 2 Psalm 25

Oppression is universal in history. Today we can pray Psalm 25 with as much meaning as did the author.

\* \* \*

Sept. 3-9 I Chronicles 29:10-18

We cannot be selfish with our possessions, since they, as all good things, come from God's love. May we then pray to be more generous in sharing our wealth with those in need, for as long as God provides, we will never want.

\* \* \*

Sept 10-16 Psalm 27

At times we may feel abandoned and defeated, but we can rely on God to be with us even in despair and when the presence of God may not be felt.

\* \* \*

Sept. 17-23 II Corinthians 5:17-6:2

It is through Christ in Christian community that God answers our prayers and renews our life. Pray that God may grant us the courage to remove obstacles to Christian love and community in our daily lives.

\* \* \*

Sept. 24-30 Colossians 3:9-16

Ask that God may help us to abolish the distinctions we make that inhibit the love of God (like heterosexual and homosexual, female and male) because we are all one in Christ, and Christ is in all.



OFFICERS' JOB DESCRIPTIONS The four leaders below serve as the officers of AFFIRMATION, making interim decisions on behalf of the group, consulting with members between meeting as may be feasible and appropriate.

CO-COORDINATORS (two):

1. to guide agenda-building and processing of AFFIRMATION meetings.
2. to develop and implement program sessions for national meetings.
3. to create task forces as needed to facilitate member involvement & action.
4. to guide the overall management processes through which the experiences and resources of the members are energized, activated and utilized.
5. to delegate appropriately defined responsibilities to members and/or task groups.
6. to coordinate tasks and responsibilities emerging in the life of AFFIRMATION

---communications, programming, funding.

EDITOR OF THE NEWSLETTER:

1. to receive and edit contributions from officers and members.
2. to develop format and publish and mail Newsletter periodically as determined by officers and/or group.
3. to present financial report of costs of publishing and distribution to the officers and members of AFFIRMATION.

TREASURER:

1. to receive and deposit membership dues, contributions and special funds in an account: AFFIRMATION: United Methodists for Lesbian/Gay Concerns.
2. to maintain a checking account and to disburse funds on behalf of AFFIRMATION in keeping with policies established by the group & supervised by the officers.
3. Present at least annually to the membership a report of the financial status of all funds and transactions to the membership and to consider periodic reports in the Newsletter as a means of keeping the membership informed

ERA SUPPORTED BY AFFIRMATION

The oppression which denies equal rights to women is the same oppression which denies equal rights to gay men and lesbians. Therefore AFFIRMATION has resolved not to meet in ERA non-ratifying states.

PEGGY HARMON WRITES ---

These first few weeks as co-convenor of AFFIRMATION have been busy, exciting, and sometimes a little scary. Much is happening with the church and gay/lesbian issues and it is good to be involved in working for positive change. I am hoping that the next few months will see significant strides toward the goals which we adopted at our May meeting. Network-building provides an excellent goal toward which we can all begin or continue to work. A firm network provides a solid base for support and communication. This to me seems vital to the awareness of and meeting of needs and to the establishment and fulfilling of our goals.

As a lesbian who is now visible in the church and working for positive change, I would very much like to hear from other lesbians. I would like to know of your needs, your joys, and whatever else you want to share. Are there ways that AFFIRMATION can be helpful to you? Women's participation in AFFIRMATION has been small in numbers in the past and yet we are hoping that this organization can work in such a way as to meet some of the needs of both lesbians and gay men. Please let your thoughts be known. Correspondence will be kept confidential.

Half jokingly, it was suggested that the co-convenors write an 'inspirational' article for the Newsletter. Inspiration is ultimately the work of the Spirit. As we share and work together during the coming months, let us live in the faith and hope that the Creating, Redeeming, and Sustaining Spirit will be with us and provide us with the inspiration that we need.

A CENTRALIZED COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK has been established to serve as a contact point for persons interested in AFFIRMATION and its work. Written messages or evening phone calls will be received by:

AFFIRMATION Communications Center  
c/o Bruce W. Eklund

[REDACTED]  
Kansas City, Kansas [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

NEWSLETTER-Next Deadline is September 1.

**PAUL ABELS RETURNS  
TO WASHINGTON SQUARE**

After two weeks of intense pressure on the Rev. Paul Abels to take a leave of absence, a Saturday midnight vote, June 10, by the ministers of the New York Annual Conference in Bridgeport, Connecticut, tipped the power balance toward his reappointment as pastor of Washington Square United Methodist Church in New York City where he has served since 1974. In pressing him to leave, the bishop and Abels' district superintendent cited

**GARRETT EXPELS GAYS**

By a 15-to-10 vote, the faculty of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary a United Methodist school located on the campus of Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, has decided to dismiss self-declared homosexuals James Mason and Terry Colbert from the seminary's master of divinity program on the basis that they are "unordainable" in the United Methodist Church.

James Will, professor of theology at Garrett, strongly criticized the move in a chapel sermon, terming it a decision that "reflects institutional legalism grounded in anxiety over future economic support for the school." Mason and Colbert, in good standing academically, have the support of many Garrett and Northwestern students; a defense campaign is underway and several demonstrations in their behalf have been held. The Associated Student Government at Northwestern, by a 56-to-4 vote, called on Garrett to reconsider its "ill-conceived" action.

Samuel Todes, chairman of Northwestern's philosophy department and faculty adviser to the NU Gay Union/Lesbian Alliance, pointed out that many people attend Garrett to obtain a specific type of education without intending to be ordained. "Garrett should provide this training on a non-discriminatory basis," he said. "Then it is up to the denomination to decide what to do with the products of that training."

---The Christian Century, May 31, 1978.

alleged threats from the far right to challenge his character under disciplinary question # 18, "Are all the ministerial members of the conference blameless in their life and official administration?"

When Abels stood firm in his refusal, the hierarchy twice sought support from the conference Board of the Ordained Ministry to force a leave of absence under paragraph 433. This failed by increasing majorities, precipitating the midnight showdown when the ministers of the conference by nearly a 4-to-1 margin rejected the bishop's and cabinet's recommendations for involuntary leave of absence and to request from the Judicial Council a declaratory judgment on the appointment of an "avowed practicing homosexual."

One factor in Abels' situation was publicity following last November's educational conference at Washington Square on "Homosexuality and the United Methodist Church." An article by George Vecsey in the New York Times of Nov. 27, 1977, headed, "Minister Sponsors Homosexual Rituals," discussed Abels' views on gay/lesbian covenant services. This factor led one observer to ask, "Is the Methodist hierarchy saying that it can deal with furtive, tea-room sex but gay relationships seeking faithfulness in the gospel are too much?" A long-time ministerial delegate from New York to the General Conference hailed the conference vote as "a turning point for gay liberation in the church and nation."

**BRYANT ZONKER PAYS UP**

First baptized in 1900, the Rev. R. K. Heacock of Austin, Texas, had another sort of 'laying on of hands' at an Anita Bryant rally in the Austin City Auditorium last May 9. Heacock's offence was that he remained seated when the orange juice lady was introduced. He reported that from behind him "a woman pounded my shoulders and rammed her ring set into my head as a hint for me to stand." The license plate on the attacker's Buick led to her name and address. A carefully couched letter from Heacock's lawyer yielded a written apology and \$200 for two of Heacock's favorite church charities.

Heacock concludes, "I make this report with the hope that tolerance will increase and sin decrease." And we conclude by conferring on the Rev. Heacock our Gay Gratitude Award, to be shared with the Southern Baptists who foiled Bryant in her bid for their vice-presidency, saying she would "complicate our communications."